

Employee Relations Guideline #26

TO: DEPARTMENT MANAGERS, SUPERVISORS AND
FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

DATE: JANUARY 2016

FROM: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES

Employees should submit all documents, inquiries and/or comments about the District's Educational Assistance Program to Workforce Development at HRPL@bart.gov or stop by our office in the Human Resources Department at 300 Lakeside Drive, 20th Floor, Oakland.

I. Purpose

The purpose of the educational assistance program is to support the personal and professional development of BART staff and meet the current and future needs of the District. Educational assistance funds are available to full-time BART employees who wish to enroll in job-related or promotion oriented courses.

II. Definitions

Approved courses are defined as classes, workshops, seminars or training provided through traditional classroom, video-based, distance learning, web-based (on-line) and certain correspondence courses.

- A. Job-related courses - Courses that are of direct value to the employees in the performance of his/her current job assignment. This includes courses in an academic program which are necessary to complete an approved degree program.
- B. Promotion-oriented courses - Courses that are necessary in order to meet the minimum qualifications of a District position that the employee desires.
- C. Continuing Professional Education and Development:
 - Courses that are necessary in order for an employee to obtain or maintain District required professional certification or licensing for a position which the employee holds or seeks to hold.
 - Courses related to preparing to take test obtaining to job-related degrees, certifications, accreditations, license etc.
 - Courses that contribute to succession planning and career development goals and objectives.

- D. Accredited Institutions - Community colleges, colleges, and universities accredited by the Western Association of Colleges and Universities or by a comparable accrediting authority.
- E. Voluntary Shift Change - Any shift change in which the employee has the ability to control movement affecting him/her adversely i.e., advance bid, promotions, reverting to his/her former position, system bids, line/yard bids, lateral bids, etc.
- F. District Required Shift Change- A reorganization or District mandated classification rebid resulting in an involuntary shift change.
- G. District Required Reduction in Force- Reduction in force actions resulting in the employee's placement in lay-off status with recall rights.
- H. Required Documentations - course registration, syllabus, or announcement describing the course and related fees and copies of original receipts, course grades/transcripts, license or Certificate of Completion.

III. Eligibility Requirements

Subject to the procedures and compensation limits outlined in Attachment A, the District will provide financial assistance to permanent full time employees for tuition, required course fees and text materials for:

- Job-related or promotion oriented courses at accredited institutions.
- Job-related or promotion oriented courses (including correspondence courses) at non-accredited institutions. This includes conferences, seminars, workshops or special training.
- Other institutions that provide credit which is transferable and accepted by an accredited institution.
- Employees cannot receive payment for the same course and related expenses in more than one Fiscal Year (FY). However, if a course begins in one FY and ends in a new FY, the employee can request to be reimbursed or receive advance payment in the FY that the course starts or the FY the course ends, **not both**.
- Supporting documentation may be required to show that an employee has exceeded 60 semester or 90 quarter units.

Note: Educational Assistance is administered and paid based on a FY calendar. Unused Educational Assistance allotments **will not** be carried over to the next FY.

IV. Reimbursement for Required Textbooks, Course Materials & Fees

Financial assistance will be provided for tuition, required textbooks and fees. Reimbursement for eligible text materials and fees is subject to the compensation limits in Attachment A.

Examples of **Eligible Expenses** for Reimbursement:

- A. Registration
- B. Laboratory Fees
- C. Required Textbooks
- D. “Other” Fees - These charges are required of all students and are neither negotiable nor discretionary for the individual enrolling in the course. (e.g. Health Fee, Activity Fee etc.)

Examples of **Non-Eligible Expenses** for Reimbursement:

- A. Processing or credit card fees
- B. Membership fees
- C. Postage, shipping, or handling of educational materials, textbooks, or supplies
- D. Parking fees
- E. Transportation cost

V. Procedure for Acquiring Reimbursement

- A. Application for approval of course work must be submitted on the Request for Educational Assistance Form. This form is available on WebBART under Documents and Procedures > Download Forms > Human Resources or you may contact the Workforce Development Team to obtain a copy of the Request for Educational Assistance Form.
- B. In order to ensure timely reimbursement, the employee should submit the completed and department approved Request for Educational Assistance Form to the Workforce Development Team at least 30 days prior to the first day of the scheduled course(s).
- C. Educational assistance requests are to be submitted to the employee’s department manager or immediate supervisor. The department manager or immediate supervisor reviews the form to ensure the employee is conforming to Employee Relations Guideline #26 and briefly explaining how the course(s) will benefit the employee.
- D. Educational assistance request must be approved **before** starting the course(s). The following documents must be attached to your request form:

- Course description (e.g. description of course, syllabus)
- Course fees (e.g. enrollment fees, cost per unit, eligible fees)
- Textbook costs, if available

Note: Additional justification may be needed if the course or training is taken at a non-accredited institution.

- E. Workforce Development will review the Educational Assistance Request Form for completion to determine if it meets the guideline, and if the amount requested is authorized for reimbursement. The employee will be notified of their approval status via their preferred contact method indicated on the Request for Educational Assistance Form.
- F. If the course(s) do not meet the criteria as outlined in these guidelines, or if the employee has not followed the proper procedure, Educational Assistance may not be approved. If the request is denied, the Workforce Development will notify the employee and state the reasons for denial.
- G. Upon completion of the course, the employee must send the following to the Workforce Development Unit:
 - A copy of the grade, license and/or certificate of completion. Successful completion of the approved course is based on a grade of “C” or better or its equivalent (e.g. Pass/Fail).
 - Copies of original receipts for tuition, textbooks, and eligible fees.

This documentation must be submitted within 30 days following the last day of the course. Failure to submit required documentation in a timely manner may result in failure to receive reimbursement.

Note: Proof of attendance may be required for workshops, conferences or seminars that do not issue a final grade, license or certificate.

- F. Workforce Development will submit requests for reimbursement including all supporting documentation and the successfully completed course(s) to the Accounting Department. The employee will be notified when the reimbursement check is ready for pick up.

Note: If an employee must drop the course due to a District required (involuntary) shift change or reduction in force, the employee is eligible for reimbursement and must submit all required documentation in accordance with these guidelines.

VI. Procedure for Acquiring Advance Payment

When requesting an advance payment the above guidelines apply in addition to A through H below.

A. Request for an advance payment should be submitted to Workforce Development **at least 30 days prior** to the start date of the course in order to ensure timely processing. The submittal must include:

- A copy of the course description/syllabus
- Course fees (e.g. enrollment fees, cost per unit, eligible fees)

B. Upon completion of the course, the employee must send the following to the Workforce Development Unit:

- A copy of the grade, license and/or certificate of completion. Successful completion of the approved course is based on a grade of “C” or better or its equivalent (e.g. Pass/Fail).
- Copies of original receipts for tuition, textbooks, and eligible fees.

This documentation must be submitted within 30 days following the last day of the course. Failure to submit required documentation in a timely manner may result in a payroll deduction. **Note:** Proof of attendance may be required for workshops, conferences or seminars that do not issue a final grade, license or certificate.

C. An employee requesting an advance payment must complete page 4 of the Request for Educational Assistance Form (“Educational Assistance Deduction Form: Notice to Bay Area Rapid Transit District Controller”) in the event that a payroll deduction is necessary.

D. An employee may secure an advance payment for tuition costs and associated fees provided the employee agrees to reimburse the District through payroll deduction in the event that:

- Satisfactory evidence of successful completion of the course is not provided to the District within thirty (30) calendar days following the schedule completion date of the course.
- The employee voluntarily drops the course for any reason, including voluntary shift changes or termination of employment with the District.

- E. The employee must notify Workforce Development of any changes to the course schedule at the time of the change. (i.e. course cancellation, dropped classes, changes in start/end date).
- F. If a course is cancelled after an employee receives a tuition advance, the employee must notify Workforce Development and reimburse the District the full amount advanced for the cancelled course. The employee will have the option to reimburse the District within 60 days or have the amount advanced deducted from their paycheck.
- G. An employee providing satisfactory evidence of an “incomplete” will have until the end of the current fiscal year to provide evidence of course completion.
- H. Tuition advances may only be used for the scheduled course(s) requested and approved by the Workforce Development Unit.
- I. If an employee has received an advance and has not met the educational assistance requirements specified in Employee Relations Guideline #26, he/she will NOT be eligible for another advance until the outstanding advance obligations has been satisfied or resolved.
- J. If the employee must drop the course due to a District required (involuntary) shift change or reduction in force; the employee is not required to reimburse the District for the advance payment for eligible expenses. However, the employee must submit all required documentation in accordance with these guidelines.
- K. If an employee terminates employment with BART for reasons other than a District required “Reduction in Force,” the employee is required to reimburse BART the full amount advanced.

Attachment A

Union	Eligibility Description	Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30)	Max Amount
ATU/ SEIU	Employee in the process of acquiring 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree (e.g. Associate of Arts, Certificate of Achievement) or when an employee is properly authorized to enroll in a Certificate of Achievement Program.	FY2014	\$950.00
		FY2015	\$1,150.00
		FY2016	\$1,350.00
		FY2017	\$1,500.00
	Employee exceeds 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree and is enrolled in upper division course work.	FY2014	\$1,250.00
		FY2015	\$1,500.00
		FY2016	\$1,750.00
		FY2017	\$2,000.00
AFSCME/ NREP	Employee in the process of acquiring 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree (e.g. Associate of Arts, Certificate of Achievement) or when an employee is properly authorized to enroll in a Certificate of Achievement Program.	FY2014	\$950.00
		FY2015	\$1,150.00
		FY2016	\$1,350.00
		FY2017	\$1,500.00
	Employee exceeds 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree and is enrolled in upper division course work.	FY2014	\$1,250.00
		FY2015	\$1,500.00
		FY2016	\$1,750.00
		FY2017	\$2,000.00
BPMA	Employee in the process of acquiring 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree (e.g. Associate of Arts, Certificate of Achievement) or when an employee is properly authorized to enroll in a Certificate of Achievement Program.	FY2014 - FY2017	\$750.00
	Employee exceeds 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree and is enrolled in upper division course work.	FY2014 - FY2017	\$4,000.00
BPOA	Employee in the process of acquiring 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree (e.g. Associate of Arts, Certificate of Achievement) or when an employee is properly authorized to enroll in a Certificate of Achievement Program.	FY2014 - FY2017	\$2,000.00
	Employee exceeds 60 semester units or 90 quarter unit degree and is enrolled in upper division course work.	FY2014 - FY2017	\$4,000.00

The above compensation limits are reflective of the Fiscal Year 2014 – 2017 Collective Bargaining Agreement, Educational Assistance Program and is subject to change during the bargaining process.